

[During the lockout in the '70s]

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Subject: The Shoeworker of Lynn [Copy 1?]

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"During the Lookout in the 70's, that strike lasted about a month, the strikers 'ould meet evenin's in a hall down on Market St. An' them as could 'ould entertain the others. There'd be songs an' things. A song sung a lot at that time was something like this: "I am an Irishman I can't deny the same, I came from Tipperary Patty Burke, it is my name. Row boys, row, The more I wish to roam The sun will shine in the harvest time To welcome poor Patty home. I'm the boy that's gay and frisky No matter where I roam The sun will shine in the harvest time To welcome poor Patty home." #####

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"I usta live way up in West Lynn near where the G.E. is today. Fur quite a long while I rode ta work on a bicycle. That wuz before automobiles come in, and bicycles wuz handy ta have, and they wuz all the rage too. There're comin' back in favor [taday?], but nothin' near like they wuz then.

"Took me 'bout a week ta learn ta ride. Thought I never would, that week, 'till it come ta me sudden how ta do it. I got right on then and rode.

"Lotta the men in the shops rode bicycles ta work. Most [a?] them that din't ride the electric cars had 'em, 'less they lived near the shop. We'd keep 'em in a shed by the shop. Mabbe, be a couple, a dozen in that shed.

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Colored Cutters Wanted

"In my day, most a the shoe shops had that sign on the outside their shops all the time, and it didn't mean colored men neither. It meant men that could cut colored shoes.

"An' men that would cut 'em. We all hated ta cut 'em if we could get outa it fur it wuz like bein' between the devil an' the deep blue sea. If ya wuz a poor one, ya got the devil from the boss till he made a nervous wreck outa you. Many's the colored cutter I seen with his nerves all shot ta blazes 'cause a the hell he got from the boss who'd always be asayin' 'that there pair a shoes aint matchin' like they oughta' or 'why does it take you sa much leather ta cut a case a shoes?'

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[? is ? ? ? ?] [? ?.]

An' if ya turned out ta be a good colored cutter, ya wuz in fur it too, 'cause then ya'd get all the colored work piled on ya. It wuz no wonder that most a the shops had that sign out, 'COLORED CUTTERS WANTED . . '

"The guys that went ta see their best girls in yella shoes long about 25 year ago, didn't have no idea how hard it wuz fur the fellas in the cuttin' rooms ta match the parts in them shoes perfect. It sure took good nerves and brains an' an eye that wan't color blind ta do it. used

"No sir, none of us wanted the job of bein' [.] a colored cutter, even through though we got more pay fur it. It wuz less pay in the end fur it took too much outa ya."

Uncle Jimmie spread a newspaper on the kitchen floor to illustrate [illustrate?] the difficulty of colored cutting of his day.

"Now say, this here newspaper'd be a piece of colored skin. There in the center it'd be tapering off ta dark. Here along the edges it'd be lighter. Well, a colored cutter'd havta

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cut fur one pair from the outside a the skin so it 'would all be the same color exact. An' sometimes there'd be fifteen 'er twenty pieces fur one pair a shoes, an' that 'would take a lotta leather. If there wun't be enough a that one shade in the piece a leather ya wuz cuttin' from, ya might havta go all aroun' the cuttin' room, ta match up what ya wuz cuttin' with the colored leather the other colored cutters wuz cuttin' from 'ould jest match the shoes you'd be cuttin'.

"Then the dark color in the middle a the skin 'ould be used fur shoes a darker shade.

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"In addition to a colored cutter / havin' ta match the color, he also had ta see to it, that the strong part a the leather 'ould be in the place that 'ould be in the place that 'ould get the hardest wear. An' the pattern had ta lay on the grain a the leather jest right so the pieces wun't stretch all outa shape. We had ta do that fur all shoes though, black shoes as well as colored.

"Accordin' ta the number a pieces in a shoe, that many little piles a cutter'd have there beside him an' each piece that wuz alike piled one on top another'n till there'd be enough to make a case. An' as I said before, sometimes there'd be fifteen 'er twenty pieces. Then when all them little piles 'ould come ta the stitcher, she'd take one piece from each pile ta sew together fur each shoe.

"The pieces fur colored shoes 'ould all havta be numbered. All the pieces fur one pair 'ould be marked '1' the pieces fur the second pair 'ould be marked '2', and so on. That 'ould be so she wun't get the colors mixed up when they wuz matched perfect.

"It's a lot easier ta cut colored shoes today because the pieces a leather all comes one shade. That's cause it's tanned with chemicals. Usta be all vegetable tannin'. We called the old bark tannin' vegetable tannin!! Some a the skins we cut had been in them tanner's vats fur weeks an' had had beef blood rubbed into the pours a the skin. If ya had gone ta see the tanneried in my day ya mighta seen the skin a young calf 'er goat all sewed

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tagether and floatin' aroun' in them vats like they wuz the dead 5 body a the animals.
Took time ta tan skins the old vegetable tannin' way. But it sure made good leather. used
[pass?] [?] used

"We cutters could always tell the kinda skin we wuz cuttin, jest from the feel a it."
